



pentagram

Lectorium Rosicrucianum

Live on the basis of the new soul principle

Piet Mondriaan – painter of emptiness

Edda – the world tree

illumination on the couch?

Grimm's fairy tale of frau holle

The new word – life is beautiful and cruel

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As the third issue of 2011 lies before you, the power of seeking *with* the Light and the struggle in our own inner being associated with it, approaches you. It was written by people who are clearly on their way, who seek with the seekers, who knock on the doors of the imperishable, because he who was seeking yesterday and finds today, first of all learns that he should continue seeking! This is the method that all the great ones used, and which we, too, want to learn in order to accompany those who seek and help each other with all the Light that is in us. This is the way in which soul power irradiates our immediate environment and in which the Light finds its way into the world through people.



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Cover: The outside contains the sign, the hieroglyph, of the inner being. Man mirrors the development of a flower or a plant: genesis, beauty, fruit. © elly booi

live on the basis of the new soul principle

J. van Rijckenborgh

To be able to fathom the conscious, awakened life of the soul, it is useful to form a good idea of the concepts consciousness, life and soul. Consciousness develops when the ensouling principle, causing life, occupies the central place in our system. In visible nature, there is much life with regard to which we may speak of an ensouling principle, but in which this principle is not indwelling and therefore affects the life system concerned from the outside. Then no consciousness can exist in such a life manifestation. In this context, we think for instance of the vegetable world and of the world of the insects.

Even in the large majority of animal species, we cannot speak of an individual ensouling principle. Most animal species exist on the basis of a group soul.

With regard to other animal species, we may speak of a kind of semiconscious state. Then the ensouling principle is only partially indwelling; then it does not lie wholly concentrically in the bodily vehicles, but partially hangs and vibrates outside them. In a few higher animal species, like horses and some dogs, the ensouling principle approaches virtually perfect indwelling, as is the case with human beings. If the evolution of the animal species concerned were able to continue, dogs, horses and people would, with regard to their nature-born state, stand on an absolutely equal footing. Then would happen what, throughout history, many authors have assumed to be possible: the manifestation of thinking, consciously living animals and also the formation of animal communities. Think of Gulliver's Travels, by the well-known author Jonathan

Swift, in which Gulliver encounters, amongst other things, a community of horses that act, think and live as people. Indwelling ensoulment, lying concentrically in the vehicles of the personality, also enables thought, at least brain activity in the ordinary human sense.

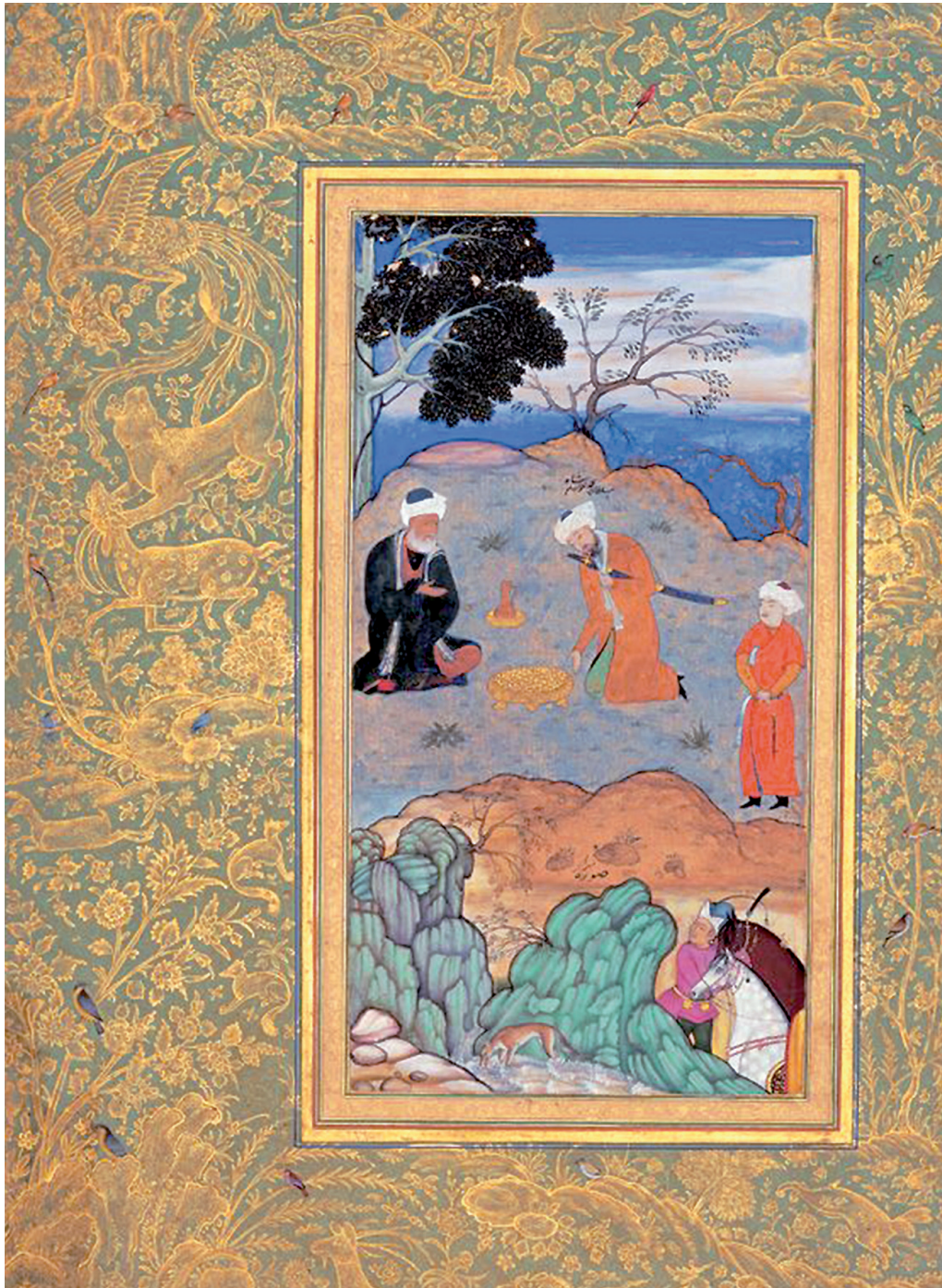
THE ENSOULING PRINCIPLE The physical body is built up of cells and atoms. It lives and remains vital because it possesses an etheric double. This etheric double continuously propels a fourfold vital force into the organism. If this etheric vehicle would not function properly in a person, all kinds of physical difficulties would arise.

Taken as a whole, the physical body and the etheric double are vivified by an ensouling principle. If the thread between the ensouling principle and the organism is broken in any way, death occurs and the organism disintegrates, because it can no longer maintain itself in the system.

We have ascertained that life originates from



Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri were the founders of the Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross. In this School, they explained and exemplified the path of the liberation of the soul to their pupils in all kinds of ways, often on the basis of original texts from the universal teachings.



the cooperation between an ensouling principle, an etheric double and a physical organism. Consciousness arises when the ensouling principle is wholly indwelling. This is why various states of consciousness, of semi-consciousness, et cetera, can be distinguished. The mutual differences are caused by the relationship between the soul and the organism. It is always the question whether the soul principle lies wholly or only partially concentrically in the vehicles. Our investigation makes it clear that the soul principle is by far superior to life, its forms and its phenomena. Everything depends on the soul principle, on the ensoulment.

What, then, is the soul principle? The soul principle is of an astral or sidereal nature. We may associate it with the astral vehicle of the personality that is drawn as a mantle around the physical body with its etheric double. The astral vehicle is composed of atoms of a higher, more tenuous gradation than the ether and material atoms. Thus there are material, ether and astral atoms, corresponding with three spheres: the material, the etheric and the astral sphere.

An etheric sphere surrounds the physical body of the earth and the astral sphere encircles the ether sphere. The human astral body sojourns in this sphere during the hours of the night. It is pulled up into it. The astral body exists in three states of being, in three degrees of density, we might say; it has three different vibration frequencies.

In the world of dialectics (and please pay attention to this, for then you will understand what transfiguration is), one of these three astral states works in a positive way and the other two in a negative way.

The positive pole of the astral vehicle corresponds to the spleen-liver system, particularly to the liver, while the two negative states correspond to the heart and the head. In virtually all dialectical people, the seat of the consciousness is concentrated in the spleen-liver system, while the emotional and mental life is attuned to it. This condition is qualitatively fundamental to the life of almost all people.

POWERFUL ACTIVITY We would like to enter a new stage as soul-born people. In other words, we begin by striving for the realisation of a new astral principle. The principle that has ensouled us since our birth has a dialectical structure. In the Spiritual School, in the Young Gnosis, our pupils assemble in order to receive a new soul principle that they want to propel to powerful activity in their microcosm. If we achieve what we strive for in this way, we will experience that this has immeasurable, glorious results that can nevertheless be examined absolutely scientifically.

As nature-born entities, we are ensouled by an astral self, the atomic composition of which can be wholly explained from the nature of death. However, because of his life situation, a person may have been driven to pull up the consciousness from the spleen-liver system

He who recognises this seeking is busy pulling up the centre of the consciousness from the spleen-liver system into the heart

into the heart. Even this first beginning causes a peculiar disturbance in the ordinary process of life. The person who is able to pull the consciousness up into the heart, in this way not only opens the door of the heart to the gnostic light, but he also pushes the astral self, the ensouling, nature-born principle that had controlled his whole life until then, out of its magnetic order.

THE GATE OF THE HEART IS OPENED The serious pupil of the Spiritual School disturbs the order of his own nature-born principle that ensouls him, that moves him and makes him live. He accomplishes this by pulling the consciousness up from the spleen-liver system into the heart by an intense longing for the liberating light and by seeking this light with perseverance.

He who recognises this seeking is busy pulling up the centre of the consciousness of his nature-born state from the spleen-liver system into the heart!

By this longing for salvation, this yearning of the heart, the gate of the heart is immediately opened to the light of the Gnosis. The order of the positive liver centre and the order of the negative heart centre are then broken up.

By this change, this disturbance of the magnetic order, the grip of the astral world of ordinary nature is weakened. Simultaneously, this creates the possibility that another soul principle, which entered the heart and awakened the rosebud from its sleep of death, will develop in this way and find entrance into him.

What primarily matters for a positive pupilship is that the candidate succeeds in accomplishing the transfiguration of the soul. This is the key to success on the path.

THE NEW PRINCIPLE If the pupil walks the path of the reborn soul state, things are initially the same as with plants and animals. There can be no new consciousness until the astral principle, the new soul principle, is concentric with regard to the other vehicles. Then the new soul principle may exist; it may work in the pupil, churning and driving him to many different modes of life. However, the new consciousness fails to appear, because the new soul principle is not yet concentric with regard to the other vehicles. Then the new soul exerts an influence upon life, and we can therefore, thank God, speak of a new nascent soul life. However, it is still uncontrolled, not

yet conscious and therefore lacking in experience. This is why the School of the Rosycross continuously insists, as has always been the case in the Universal Gnosis, that the pupil, by self-sacrifice and an absolutely serving cooperation, lives in accordance with the standards of the new soul state. Most pupils, if not all, are touched and marked by the light. This is why the School unceasingly speaks to them: 'Whether you are aware of it or not, live on the basis of the new soul principle, on the basis of what you possess of the new soul power. Then one day you will live!'

If you do so, this will promote the new mode of life. When Jesus says in the Gospel: 'I will come to you and make my home with you,' this means that the new, immortal soul principle should take shape absolutely concentrically with regard to the other vehicles. The soul of renewal should, therefore, be able to reside within the candidate. Just as the old soul was concentric with regard to all vehicles, this should also happen with regard to the new soul principle.

REVERSING THE POLARITY However, a tremendous change occurs because of this reversal. In the old, nature-born soul state, the positive pole lies in the spleen-liver system and the negative pole in the head and the heart. In the new soul state, this is reversed, so that we see the positive pole erected in the head and the heart, while the negative pole rests in



However, in the transfigured soul state, the candidate reaches the beginning, from which true, eternal evolution is possible

the spleen-liver system. If we accomplish this reversal and consistently live on the basis of the new soul power, the new soul consciousness will also flourish, and we may speak of a conscious, awakened life of the soul in a gnostic sense.

Thus we may now say that the soul state, through which we can live in the new astral field, concerns an astral vehicle with a reversed polarisation. Turning towards the gnostic light means at the same time a reversal, a turning-around in a literal sense.

In this context, think of the story about Mary, the mother of Jesus, of whom it is written: 'When the Holy Spirit came to her, she turned around and saw Him.'

Until now, we have not mentioned that the human astral principle, the astral vehicle, the soul being, is linked with a wellspring from which it is nourished. For nature-born man, this wellspring is to be found in the astral world itself, with the nature aeons. However, in the transfigured soul state, in the reversed soul state, the candidate reaches the beginning, from which true, eternal evolution, eternal genesis is possible. In this soul state, there no longer exists a link with the nature aeons,

but rather only with the Spirit, the original, life-giving power of the all-manifestation. Only in the new soul state does the link with the original Pymander become a fact and what was once broken is restored. The eternal Spirit will manifest itself in our whole state of life via the immortal soul principle.

This is why it is a holy, universal law: 'He who renews the soul, finds and meets the Spirit.' ✨

Literature:

J. van Rijckenborgh, *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis and Its Call in the Eternal Present*, chapter XXII. Rozekruis Pers, Haarlem, 1982

breaking out of the cycle

Heavy footsteps walk over me. People laid me across the brook, so that I might serve as a bridge. They chose me, because my kind of wood is known to be very sturdy. Oak trees, it is said, do not rot so quickly and are strong. Memories stir within me. It is not the first time that someone walks over me, tramps on me, stumbles over me, jumps... I had already gained this experience early in my life and subsequently, this happened time and again. As a small acorn, a heavy storm tore me loose from my mother, together with many other brothers and sisters. I rolled down the mountain, on which there were many thick oak trees. I lay between two large stones. The hoof of a deer that ran over me pushed me deeper between the stone chips. From above, earth shifted over me and fallen leaves covered my little hole. Then I heard sniffing. Wild boars! They had almost found me, if they had not fled because of a shot. With his leg, one of them pushed me even deeper into the ground. The following spring, my root bore deeply and I pushed a tender shoot with beautiful leaves up to the light. Unheeding strollers walked over me; others bent the shoot with their shoes. But because I was flexible, I was always able to raise myself up again. One day, I heard how trees were felled above me on the mountain where I had come from. In the din, I heard the crashes that were the last sighs of the old oak trees that were felled. One of the men said: 'We will saw many planks and beams from these thick trunks and the crowns of these trees will give us a lot of firewood in winter.'

This was the fate of a beautiful oak tree: growing for ages, enduring wind and weather, allowing itself to be cut and carved, disappearing one bad day into a sawing machine, being processed for furniture or being burned. The last service that the tree performs in its cycle on this earth is going up in flames, releasing the solar warmth, stored in the wood for many years. A few ashes and some moisture are all that remain or, as in this case, a little bridge in a landscape.

Once, while it was still standing there, even though it had become years older, two passers-by projected these thoughts onto the oak tree. An eternal, never-ending cycle, they were thinking, is that all? Is that the principle of life on this earth? Does this apply to all living beings, to all plants, animals and people, sometimes unto a blessing, sometimes unto a curse? They thought that they heard a soft voice near the tree, in the silence of a clear, cold night. 'A human being may be compared to a tree, although he has his roots in heaven. Break out of the cycle of eternal birth, growing up, flourishing and dying again. Unfold within yourself the spiral to arise. You have felt the desperation and asked the question. You receive the only possible answer: be born again one time! Inwardly transcend this field and enter a higher destiny. Then your death puts a necessary end to becoming old and stiff, and your new ensoulment is an awakening of light, ever-flexible, divine faculties that are fully able to assimilate the life streams of the original life. ☸



the creative moment

AN ATTEMPT TO APPROACH

A Zen practitioner practises the same act for years, regardless of whether this concerns pouring tea, archery or chalking, only to experience one day that at a moment of unconditionally losing himself – or the self – the miracle occurs: from the duality of ego and purpose, he enters the unity with Being.

EXHAUSTION Can you experience this? You know that the I should be dissolved on the spiritual path. This is why you begin practising it. Its failure has been preprogrammed, but nevertheless, nothing is wrong with trying to do so. During the long struggle and the self-observation associated with it, you experience your failure. Your personal will does not extend far enough, and even obstructs this striving. In time, this experience causes great exhaustion. However, once you have become used to continuing your attempts, though tired and unsuccessful, you are, as a personality and as the ‘doer’ buried within you, able to continue to work, even if visible successes fail to come.

After all, what do you know of this truly spiritual moment? What does it look like? In which form may it present itself? Even if your efforts stem from the memory of earlier experiences of a ‘breakthrough of consciousness’, you still have forgotten the path to it; you have forgotten the key or the door. In a peculiar way, it is elusive, veiled in mists, so that you are, as a struggling seeker, absolutely unable to see it, even if you are standing right in front of it. Time and again, you have forgotten the door; you have forgotten it, even if you have already experienced your temporary breakthrough more than once. For people, it is not possible to possess a key that fits in every case. If things are all right, the opened door is time and again granted to you.

THE STRUGGLE OF YOUR EXISTENCE Thus you stumble around at the border, homesick, filled with longing, filled with hope and ideas. What kind of ideas prevent experiencing ‘the opened door’? To which obstacles does this refer, and where do they originate?

During your life, you have gained the experience that a certain way of acting benefits you, and that it gives you a headstart on others. Throughout the years, you form a pattern in this way that you partially took over from your parents, partially brought with you as karma and that partially depends on your own current experiences.

With regard to the special moments, to the creative breakthroughs, there are also more or less clear memories and images of how they should feel, how they should appear and how they might exactly present themselves. In the struggle of your existence, you have these images, which your subconscious unceasingly weaves into your pattern as strategic input, at your disposal, but they do not help you in the least when it is important to approach true freedom or ‘the unity with being’. On the contrary, they rather keep you in a suffocating image of that form which increasingly crystallises during your life. With all their energy, young people break through these walls. With regard to creativity, they are often courageous and unconventional, plunging into new forms with a new content. The inner pattern has not yet become wholly obsessively active.

What characterises the special moment, the



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) Fall of the Tees in Yorkshire, 1825-26. Indianapolis Museum of Art, USA

creative experience? This might be described as follows: 'Because you are not particularly attached to it, it will not abandon you. If someone walks the path, as a silent observer, in self-surrender, he will discover that, although he inwardly dissociates every second, the new light irradiates him as it were. It is not his; the new life belongs to the other one, but your own old self wholly merges into it.' (J. van Rijckenborgh) In an absolutely non-spectacular way, yet free from everyday familiarity, you continue with your former actions. They continue, but you no longer attach any value to them. What happens, happens 'right through someone', following a necessity that falls outside our coordinates of judgement.

SLOW MOTION In this context, you have a peculiar experience. You become slightly slower in your actions. Or are appearances deceptive? You seemingly work effortlessly, lightly, natu-

rally and without comment, just as filmmakers play special or decisive moments in the movie in slow motion. What characterises these moments? Why does every spectator know what the director wants to express in slow motion? Deeply buried in all people, a memory purportedly slumbers that time will somehow cease – if we were only able to dissociate from the I. At those decisive, fateful moments, we are, wholly neutralised as to the I, faced with the power of a higher stream of energy; in a splendid way, we are linked with it and are handed over to it in a liberating way. The desire to surrender to this stream makes our whole system come to rest. This moment seems to last forever, it is said – and yields again at the next moment to prepare the balance and to evaluate what was experienced. Stop! Do not continuously forge the keys that lock your prison from the inside, while the door is actually wide open! ✪

about the impossibility of meeting the illumination

Outside the window, the morning sun slowly moves past the horizon and now intensely shines on the brightening row of trees. The rays of the sun cast a golden hue on the table and on the paper. Unerringly, the shadow of the pen follows its counterpart, the material, blue ballpoint, across the paper and accompanies every letter with its extended black point, as if the words are simultaneously formed on two levels.

THE SIGNS We might indeed write a great deal about not being illuminated, because we experience it many times every day. We are familiar with the sorrow about undesirable living conditions and all kinds of situations in our daily lives, or with our aversion to people who grate on our nerves with their troubles and disturbing idiosyncrasies as well as with their silent, unspoken, but nevertheless not less black thoughts and feelings that often surprise us. All of them are clear signs of a totally not-illuminated state.

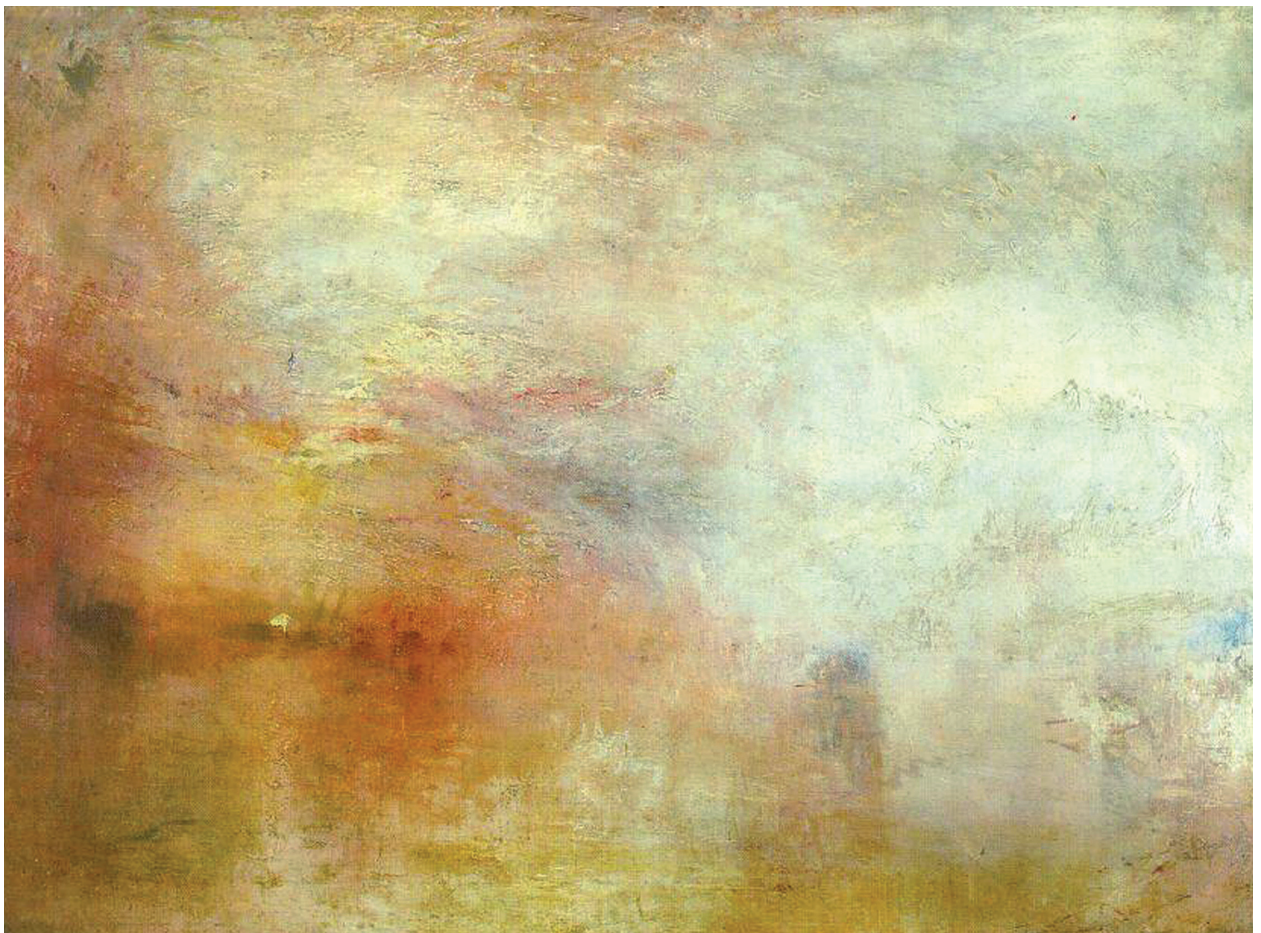
What, then, is illumination?

I look out of the window and gaze at the sun that has moved further and now disappears from sight. With it, the golden twilight above my table also disappears and is replaced by the ordinary light of a beautiful autumn day. Although the sun is now no longer clearly visible as a radiant disk before my eyes, the light still surrounds me; I can see its activity; it illuminates the day.

DESCRIBE THE SUN However, what happens during the night, when this side of the planet turns its back to the sun and darkness surrounds us? To our eyes, the sun has then undeniably disappeared. Yet, we know that it is still there and will return the next morning, or expressed more accurately, our side of the globe will turn to face the sun again. And if the night were to extend infinitely, how long would we then still know that the sun exists? And if those who had experienced the sun themselves

gradually became extinct, their descendants would certainly continue to pass on the description of the sun, although they had never seen it themselves. How would the second-hand reports many times removed then sound? Perhaps as follows:

‘Once, the sun illuminated the day with its light. Its warming rays penetrated almost every corner and let everything around it contrast sharply and clearly with luminous borders.’ And those who had never experienced the sun themselves, would be able to imagine all kinds of things about it. ‘Is it the same as thousands of fluorescent tubes, all of which are switched on simultaneously?’ No, the sunlight would be much more golden and warmer. ‘Is it something like a tidal wave of halogen lamps, lighting up at the same time?’ No, the sunlight would be much softer and dimmer. ‘Is it like a sea of white candles?’ No, sunlight does not flutter and is not blown out by the wind. ‘Therefore, to be able to describe the sunlight, should I have seen it myself?’ Yes, but even if I had never seen it, and someone who had seen it told me about it, would I believe him? And if I were to believe him, would I be able to fathom or understand it? I might be able to form an image of it in my mind, something like the image of those halogen lamps or of that sea of candles. And if I was to set out to where the sun may be experienced, and I had seen it and subsequently returned to the dark side of the earth, would I be able to tell about my journey? Would I be able to explain it in such a way that



William Turner **Sun setting over a lake (detail)** 1840. Tate Gallery, London

Therefore, I think,
the way to the light,
the way to illumination,
is not a way of speaking,
but a way of listening
and of the realisation of
what has been heard

others would understand it or would words fail? At this moment, I decided to no longer speak about illumination, that is, until I have encountered it myself, and then I can see how I should continue. This isn't such a bad ending to a story about illumination, I think, and I put my pen down.

THE SOUL IN THE LIGHT From the fringes of my consciousness, a memory crops up. When my son, five years old, was standing before me and with a pensive look, he put his hands before his eyes: 'Mama, when we are dead and our soul goes to God, is all of this only shadows' and he pointed at his hands and his body. I was deeply moved by the profound seriousness in his eyes. Children are often very pure, almost holy, I thought. Why does this memory crop up particularly at this moment? Now I discover, just like then, the truth of the child's words. What is it that casts the shadows that are our bodies, and by which light are they irradiated? When the soul goes 'to God', the bodies are still only shadows. Therefore, the

soul is the element that casts the shadows, and so, would our bodies be the shadows of the soul? A soul that is wholly light, no longer casts shadows, but is irradiated, illuminated. That's it: illumination is a property of the soul, not a state of the body, and not a quality of the personality. However, is the soul not part of the personality? I think about it.

Yes, but only to the extent that it stands in the Light as the new soul and our personality is linked with it as its shadow, yet also binding it. Here my chain of associations stops for the time being and I am amazed. A five-year old intuitively understood this coherence with his undistorted, childlike thinking. Someone who has truly experienced the Light and who has himself become Light, advised us to become as children. Did I understand his advice? And if I had understood it, would I be able to transform it in my daily life? What did my son actually do exactly?

He undauntedly accepted the possibility of his own death, but was at the same time open to the possibility of life. Am I, as a sensible adult, able to open myself to the impulses of the soul that has encountered the light? If I listen to my inner voice as a perceptive child, I again experience something of the Light of the spiritual sun that was never absent.

This very thought awakens in me a rare longing. I would like to listen; I would like to experience something of this light. I would like to enter into a dialogue with my soul and hear what it has to tell me.

Therefore, I think, the way to the light, the way to illumination, is not a way of speaking and sensible words, but a way of listening and of the realisation of what has been heard.

As long as my inner ears cannot hear, my inner eyes can probably not see either, and the light that may become reality for the soul, still remains like the image of a thousand fluorescent tubes for the time being.

On the spot, I decide to be silent about illumination from now on. ☸

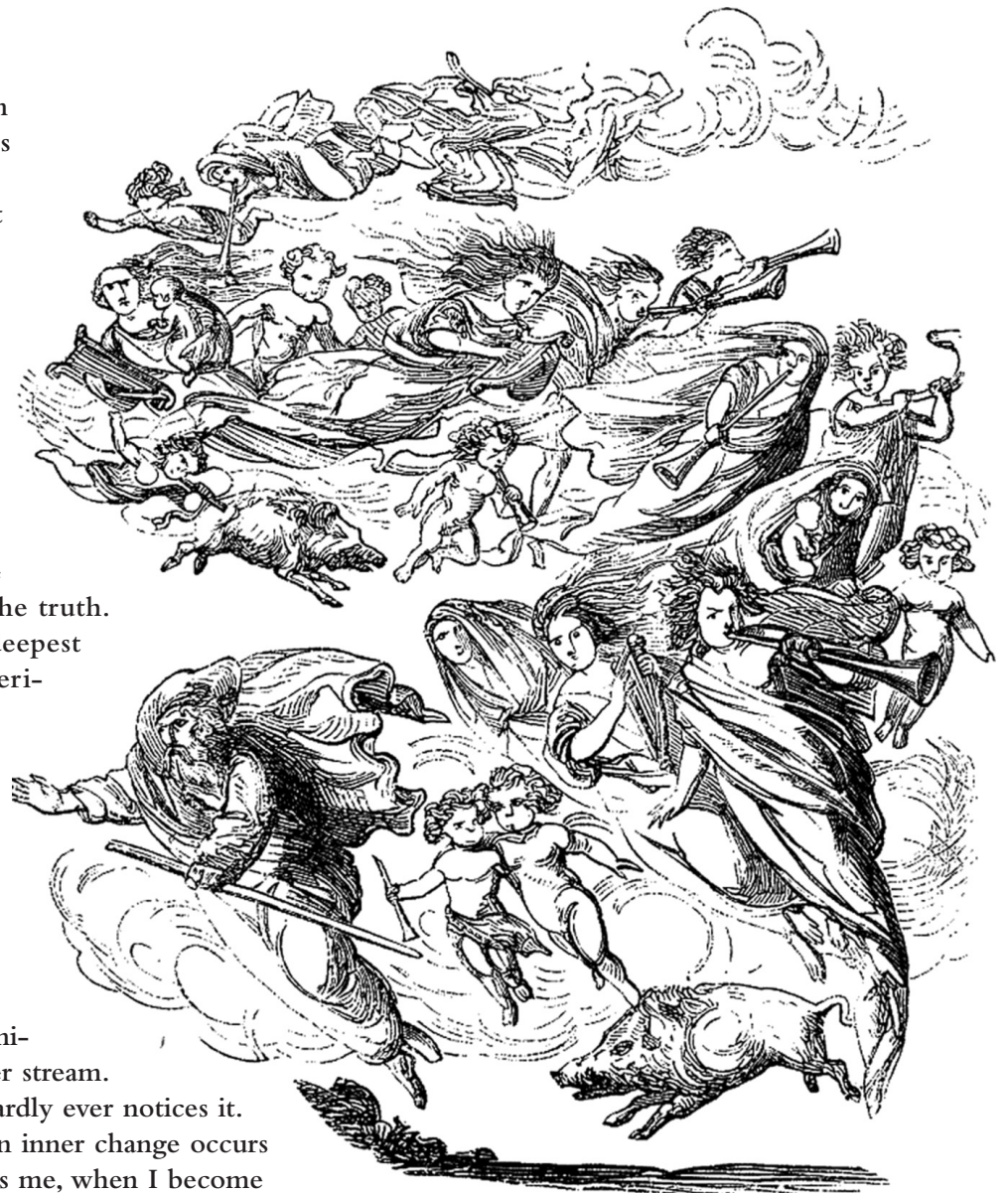


armchair illumination?

‘Do we, as Rosicrucians, experience illumination?’ If a spiritual seeker asks me this question, I hesitate for a moment before answering. Here, someone does not ask a theoretical or philosophical explanation, but a very personal answer.

GRIMM'S FAIRYTALE OF MOTHER HULDA

Can I answer him in the I-form, as ‘I’ and ‘illumination’ do, after all, not go together, and are mutually exclusive? On the other hand, this question asks for an exchange between two people, for a common conceptualisation by two souls. Here, I am addressed as a seeker, as someone who struggles to find the truth. I answer: Yes, it is my deepest conviction and my experience that illumination continuously occurs in this special field of the Spiritual School. I do not experience illumination as something spectacular, as something exalted, or as something tremendous. I rather experience illumination as a hidden power stream. My ordinary thinking hardly ever notices it. Yet, almost unnoticed, an inner change occurs that quite often surprises me, when I become aware of it. Something began to flow; something has changed. New ideas, new views on a certain problem arise in my consciousness.



A stream reaches me from the innermost, elusive, imperishable and timeless space

Often, I am uncertain whether I may still speak of 'my' consciousness as if it is exclusively mine. Of course, I possess a consciousness, an image of myself and of my environment. I think and feel according to certain patterns, but from time to time, light rays, light flashes light up in this consciousness, which I cannot explain on the basis of myself. Often, I have the feeling that I am illuminated from a higher place, as by a torch. It is as if this torch casts its rays into a dark cellar. This light grants insight, light glances, into so far dark coherences.

Often, I also experience it as if a heat lamp is lit in me, the warming rays of which initiate processes of maturation that wholly withdraw from my consciousness. However, at a certain moment, the time has become ripe – something new has developed and pushes itself out. It is very difficult to express this change, this new quality, in words.

LEARNING TO SPEAK Perhaps we may compare it to the process of learning to speak. Initially, there is only something like a passive vocabulary, but when a few concepts are explained time and again, they come out and become active. They come into the domain of the active vocabulary. First, words are only repeated; later, they can be called up and used consciously. However, even if we have an active vocabulary at our disposal, no free stream of thoughts or speaking freely and fluently are possible. The words should come into a

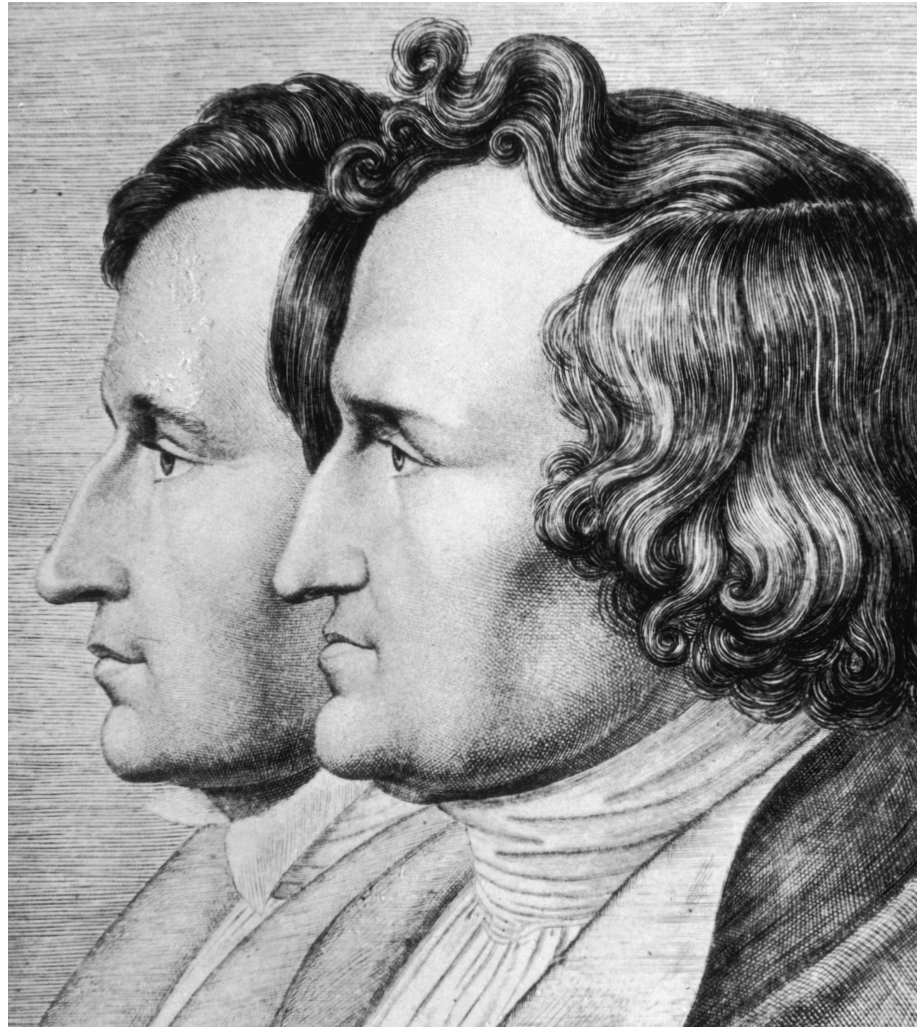
stream, and this is only possible, if they have become the expression of a power stream that arises from the inner being. I find it difficult to understand the origin of this inner stream. It certainly does not stem from my thinking and from my mental faculties. It does not develop from my emotions. It is not the result of my will or my intentions. It probably does not stem from the karmic past, from my karmic backpack. It flows from the innermost, elusive, imperishable and timeless space.

Even if I am hardly able to grasp the effect of this inner power stream, I can nevertheless do one thing: not getting in the way of this power stream.

And I can do even more: immediately living and transforming everything that is assimilated and everything that is experienced. This is only possible if we are – in the actual now – prepared to go along in the stream, admitting change – at any moment, every second. Light glances are helpers, hints, that imply an invitation. Being illuminated causes an inner tension and implies a task. The experience of the light does not tolerate hanging on the couch – it causes a sense of responsibility. It makes the desire arise to react to this gift. Any merciful touch always has an aspect of tribulation, too. Are we prepared to share what has been granted? Is the inwardly kindled fire sufficiently strong to give an impulse for the next step that is considered necessary?

Double portrait of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, painted in 1843 by their brother Ludwig Emil Grimm.

Hanauer Geschichtsverein E.V. 1844,
Hanau-Kesselstadt, Duitsland



ANALOGY WITH THE FAIRYTALE OF MOTHER HULDA This continuous tribulation is represented very concretely in the fairytale of Mother Hulda. This universal story, recorded by the Grimm brothers, is a story of pure illumination. Illumination and the liberating deed are linked in it. We encounter two different daughters of a widow, Goldmary and Peckmary. The former is the stepdaughter, beautiful and diligent, the other one ugly and lazy. Every day, the diligent daughter must spin so much outside near a well that blood drips from her fingers. If one day, the spindle falls into the well, she jumps after it to retrieve it out of fear for her stepmother. She arrives in a paradisiacal, other world.

Goldmary and Peckmary are the two aspects that are always simultaneously present in our being. If the latter acts within us, our will is

still very hesitant and our motivation I-directed. In our everyday lives, we do not yet see the many small, though very important steps of service. If the inner Goldmary acts, our motivation is different: true compassion stirs within us – based on the love of our heart, we would like to give people bread instead of stones. This is why we are ‘beautiful’. We work on the basis of this drive, until our hands bleed. We struggle for recognition, for the right mode of life, for ‘harmony in the change of our activities’. We gain painful experiences – our daily struggle leads us into the depth, because we may practise true compassion and true love in this world, but we will not find them. They develop on a quite different level of existence. In this other world, on the level of the soul, our vibration key is measured, our willingness to answer and to serve.

The three tests, to which Mother Hulda submits Goldmary (and later Peckmary, too) in the other world, contain much symbolism. First, Goldmary passes an oven, in which the bread calls: 'Leave me out, otherwise I will burn; since long, I am well-done!' How often do I not wonder, when confronted with the concrete next step: am I able to do it? Am I ready for this task?

From the perspective of the I, these are troubling questions, but if I succeed to let go of this limiting point of view and confidently take the next step, there is no longer doubt or good and bad.

We have to use what has matured on the level of the soul, and only if it is used, the power stream is maintained and is inexhaustible.

For the next test, Goldmary comes to an apple tree that asks her to shake it, because all its apples are 'ripe'. Then the apples must be piled up. This is an interesting aspect. What has matured on the level of the soul not only exists for itself, but it should be gathered and combined. Many ripe elements together can ensure a strong, magnetically attracting effect. I try to imagine how a lot of apples can be piled up anyway.

This is only possible in the form of a pyramid. If a number of mature souls assemble, they together form a 'pyramid from below upward', into which a spiritual impulse can flow as a 'top down pyramid', so that a stream of power from the spiritual world can be poured out into this special field of souls.



THE GATE OF SATURN Thirdly, the diligent daughter comes to Mother Hulda, who initially causes fear and dread by her large teeth. Mother Hulda's large teeth remind me of the gate of Saturn. Hell – the root of the word can be found in Mother Hulda's name – is the goddess of death and renewal. Even nowadays, Epiphany, ending the so-called twelve holy nights, is referred to as Mother Hulda Day. After having passed the gate of Saturn, a wholly different form of service is needed. Now the diligent daughter no longer serves the stepmother (dialectics), but she serves the pure primordial matter. The bed as a point of rest is a beautiful symbol of the restoration and the purification that now can and does take place, since the old impulses are totally silent. To the extent that this work succeeds, feathers fly like snowflakes over the earth. Via the hearts of all people, who serve in this way, the life-giving principle of love, the purifying water, flows over the whole of humanity and fills all spaces.

However, the matured soul did not reach the end of its path. Sadness and homesickness overtake it – although it is a thousand times better off in the other world than in dialectics – because the actual task, the salvation

We have to use what has matured on the level of the soul,
and only if it is used, the stream of power is maintained

of fallen humanity, has not yet been accomplished. To this end, the new worker should link ideality and reality very concretely. What is spiritual will forge a link with reality, with everyday life. I see it as forms of work in the world field that will absolutely result in the purification and renewal of what is astral and etheric – the spheres of life from which man lives. The willingness of the liberated soul to make this true sacrifice, namely working amidst the dirt of fallen nature, causes the ‘rain of gold’, that is, receiving the spirit-soul consciousness. With this wholly new, golden vesture, truly creative and redeeming action, right in the middle of world events, is possible – with well-considered efforts, and nevertheless wholly spontaneously, without any ulterior motives.

I often wonder why I find the fairytale of Mother Hulda so fascinating. Did I once again think up a beautiful image for myself that gives me a certain satisfaction? Don’t I always want to understand things; ‘I’ want to have a plan and a guideline.

The soul does not need a summary or a strategy. It only needs the power to take the next step. Mother Hulda’s fairytale emanates a

profound wisdom, because it explains that illumination may occur at any moment, though not as an overwhelming experience of light that clarifies everything and illuminates the whole path of change at once. Always, only the direct space before our feet is illuminated, if we are truly prepared to take the next step, to pass on what was granted and to turn it into the deed.

Literature

The Fairytales of the Grimm Brothers, Pantheon.

piet mondriaan, painter of the emptiness

In his later works, the Dutch painter, Piet Mondriaan (1872-1944), achieved an abstraction that goes back to the basic elements of design: colour, shape, plane, line. Mondriaan banned any image of reality, any recognisable individuality, from his work in order to approach the 'true' reality. He wanted to represent this permanent, 'pure' reality that does not depend on the continuously changing image of manifested forms.

He who occupies himself with such a late work by Piet Mondriaan for the first time, sees a method of working that strikes him as very purist by its tendency of reduction. Three narrow rectangles in the colours red, blue and yellow, another five fields and black dividing lines of equal width with a black triangle – is that a painting? Everything looks so simple. The coloured planes have been moved to the edge. My view jumps from one coloured field to the next. Optically, the composition does not stand still, but the speed of the movements decreases, because the blue triangle on the left in particular slows down the illusion of rotation. We rather get the impression of a quietly breathing whole. The continuous, vertical line on the right edge provides stability, and gives an impression of greatness and rest by its large distance to the coloured fields. The centre of the painting only contains a white plane.

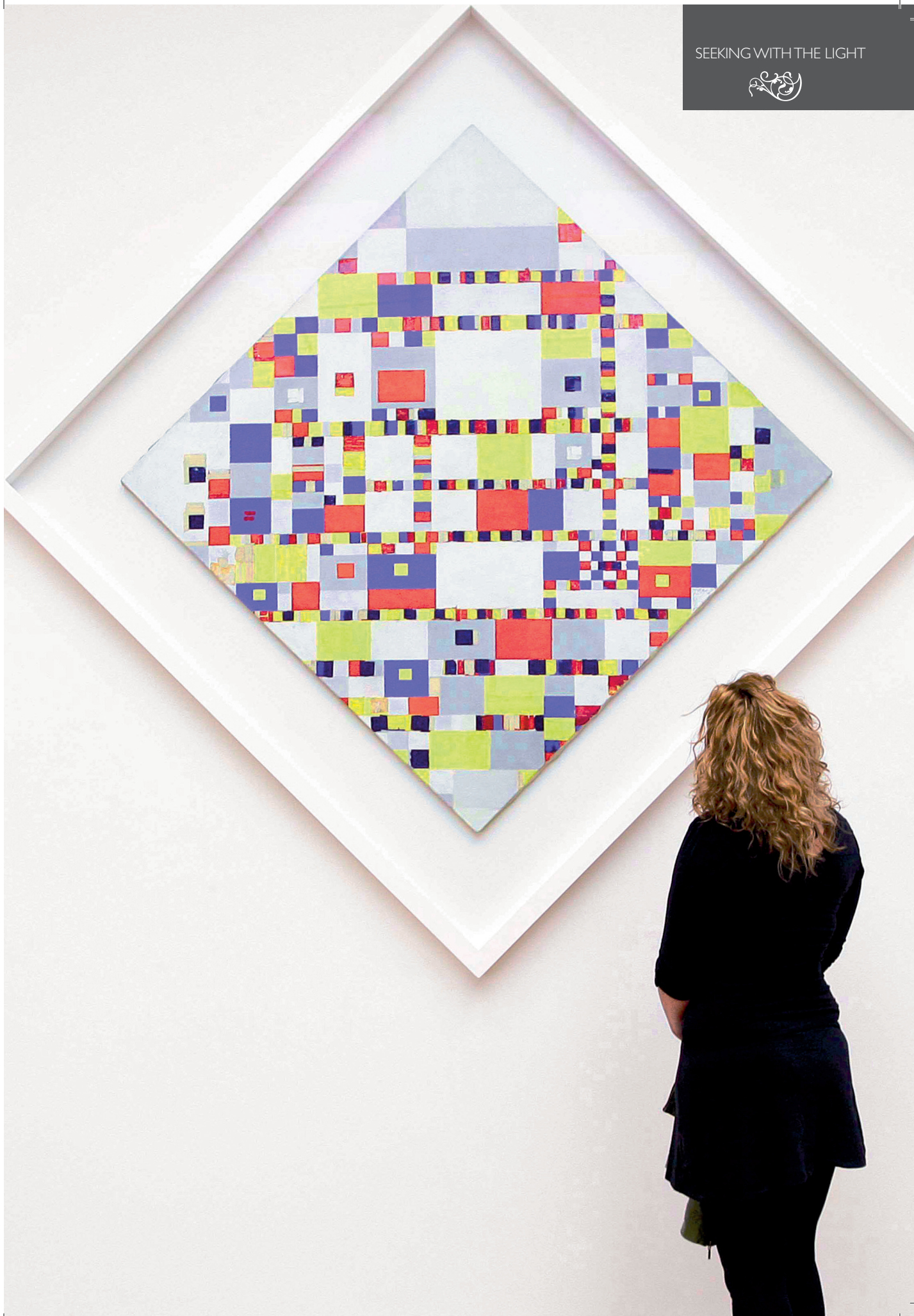
The most meaningful way of understanding art is to follow, if possible, the way that the artist himself went. Mondriaan's steps are, fortunately, very clear; and about halfway through this path of development, there are his paintings of trees. These paintings give us the sensation that the subject 'tree' has been examined very accurately. It has been mentally scanned until an image of this subject had replaced reality in the artist's mind. An artist who wants to paint nature, might say that a

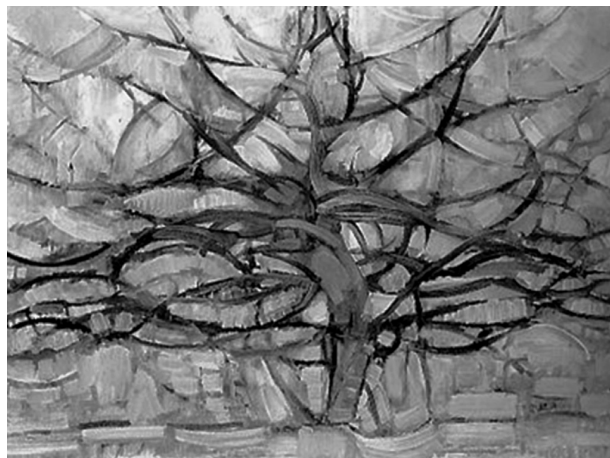
tree consists of the trunk and a number of branches and leaves, but Mondriaan says: no, the essence of the tree is to be found in the natural forces that make a living form grow from the soil and that ensure that this form is divided and expands a thousandfold. For years, Mondriaan has painted the same tree time and again. It represents vital power, the whole of nature; it possessed universal value. 'The red tree' from 1908 shows what fascinated Mondriaan: the chaotic tangle of bare branches, the wildness of nature that attracted him. Therefore, the strong red and blue colours were placed closely together with heavy brushstrokes. Tree and landscape can be clearly distinguished and recognised; the spatial effect is caused by colour, but particularly by the crossing branches.

In the version from 1911 that Mondriaan called 'The grey tree', the point of view is the same, but the motive has almost dissolved, and we can only surmise the landscape. The colours are reduced to vague hues. A clear structure of lines, activating the intermediate spaces, is dominant so that parts of the figure are mixed with parts of the background.

The painting 'Blossoming apple tree' from 1912 is even further removed from reality. The pattern of lines rather works with planes and serves the structure of the base; figure and background merge into each other. The skeleton of the tree is decomposed into juxta-

SEEKING WITH THE LIGHT





posed parts and is converted into pure forms of movement. Any emotional interest in the motive of the tree seems to have disappeared. Two years later, in *Composition 6*, the theme of nature is wholly ignored, instead of which the theme of the painting becomes order. The raster reduces the multiple forms to geometry; the straight angle and the bases are emphasised by the equivalence of line and planes.

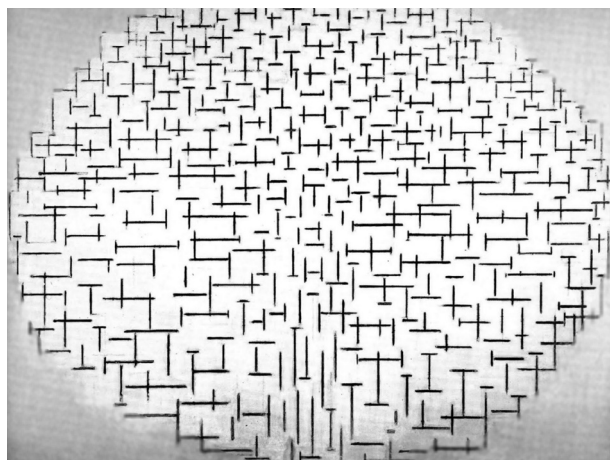
The advancing process that becomes visible in Mondriaan's paintings corresponds to the worldview of the Theosophical Society, to which he felt increasingly attracted and which he joined in 1909. In this way, he ordered the endless fullness of nature into harmony. This does not concern deformation, but carefully undertaken attempts underlying an ordered world that has been turned into a more profound cosmos. The reality that so far had offered food for his paintings must now be seized as to its existential aspect.

'It took me a long time to discover that the identity of form and colour evokes subjective emotional states that obscure the pure truth. The appearance of natural forms changes, but the truth remains... The aim is not to paint other, special colours and forms with all their limitations, but to strive for a greater unity.' This 'greater unity' in his later work, *Composition 2*, first of all strikes us by polar proportions, but goes further: primary colours – colourless, colour-colour, long-short, wide-

narrow, left-right, above-below, there and back. These contrasts always appear in mutual interaction, thus forming an equilibrium. All things are part of the whole: each part has its value for the eye because of the whole, and the whole gains its value through the parts. Everything consists of proportions and contrasts. Colour only exists through another colour, dimension is determined by another dimension, and there is no position without an opposite position. This is why I say: the relationship is the essence.

'The essence of a relationship is what exists between something and something else. I understand that a relationship exists between my hand and my pencil, when I write something down. This relationship is so self-evident that we forget that it exists at all. Every truth lies in the relationship, even such a simple one like this one. The pencil is not real nor the hand that seizes it, but the relationship between both describes the true, sole reality that exists. Cause and effect are one. This is why nothing can produce something else without both being one as well as being linked in truth.'

Being in balance and an established equilibrium are expressed by the straight line, by vertical and horizontal striving. According to the ideas of the Dutch philosopher Schoenmakers, who strongly influenced Mondriaan and the like-minded group 'De Stijl' (The Style), the universe has a mathematical struc-



Piet Mondriaan. The red tree (1908), The grey tree (1911), Composition No. 10 (1915). Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

ture. In antiquity, harmony had already been expressed in numerical relationships and in the geometric figures of square, triangle and circle. Therefore, if we want to express the harmony of the universe in an artistic way, we should try to do so in a geometric way. With Mondriaan, these lines become the basic frame of a painting. The tension comes into harmony, because he balanced the different forces. This balance is asymmetric, not rigid but dynamic. The relationships between the dimensions ensure a lively rhythm that avoids any similarity, any symmetry. Between these lines, the painter applies his forms. Rectangles and squares appear in the modest colours of black and white and in the primary colours of red, blue and yellow that contain the whole range of colours. In a harmonious interaction, the space occupied by the active colours enters into a relationship with the bare, empty space.

Colours and forms, the aura of an image, stimulate a spectator to become inwardly conscious, and in this way, they become a very personal snapshot that may be totally different when the same painting is observed the next time. In this way, the confrontation of the spectator with the same painting always keeps a special meaning. The spectator should be able to concentrate on the painting without paying any attention to the question of how it is made or what he can recognise in it. It should not remind him of any object,

but should work wholly independently as the pure art of painting. This is why the individual handwriting of the artist is completely removed; conclusions concerning the individual mood of the artist are wholly eliminated. 'The very emptiness of the paintings leaves the spectator room for his own experiences and thoughts. If something is painted that can be observed by the senses, something human is expressed... if things are not painted, there is room for the divine.'

This strongly appeals to modern art with its abstract forms (already almost a century old!): to remain faithful to its original point of departure, namely making visible what is spiritual, as a drive for and of matter. ✪

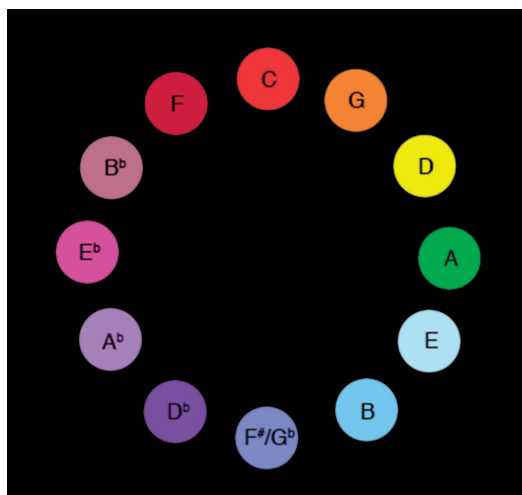
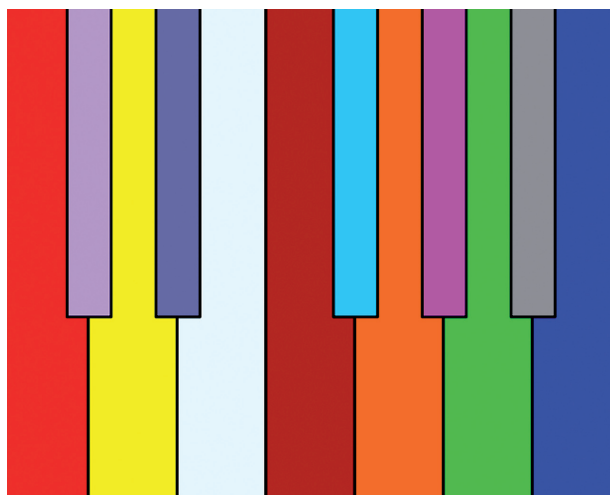
alexander scriabin

as total artist

‘MUSIC IS A PATH OF REVELATION,
A POWERFUL METHOD TO KNOWLEDGE!’

When I heard his name, Scriabin, for the first time, I could not surmise how intensely I would be occupied with him and would become more intimately acquainted with him. Since then, a year has passed and his name has in some way become anchored in my life, although initially, I wanted to bid farewell to him as quickly as possible. The confrontation with him made me discover the people whom he loved and revered. It brought me into contact with famous philosophers, psychologists and musicians, and I was able to cast a look at their teachings. He himself seems to evoke mixed reactions. Some people lavish praise on him, others do not understand him and consider his work too chaotic and too ambitious, while again others have hardly heard of him or have not heard of him at all. As far as I am concerned, he ultimately gave me food for

thought and I tried to understand him. What merits did he have for God and humanity, was the question I asked myself. During fierce discussion about him, I looked for living material to be able to write something about him. However, this did not bring me one step closer to him. Then, suddenly, the situation arose where I heard one of his compositions under special circumstances, and I was so impressed that I immediately had to write it down. In this way, the following association developed: I love him; his name alone is able to touch me like a fresh breeze. I move in his music as in a grand world that lives and breathes, that permanently changes, takes me up and forces me to grow. I might be able to sojourn in this high and pure energy; I might bathe in this lake of love and let myself be swept along. How beautiful it is to experience





this feeling, without being bound by it. In this wondrous world, it seems as if fiery thoughts fly around and meet each other. Thoughts merge with colourful tones, are born again and turn into poems, verses, prophecies and new beings. It is as if they are flames that move in an infinite dance and fulfil themselves. It seems as if I can approach myself under their influence. There is no compulsion, no hesitation within me. I am not ashamed of this feeling of love in my heart. It exists and I am part of it, as if my soul is filled with these fiery flames and I breathe with it, the flame, the fire, the light. Plants are born and the next moment, they disappear again. The form of the stars changes; meteorites choose other orbits; heaven laughs and cries. I have become a silent spectator, in whom these mighty events, this heavenly transmutation,

evokes a deep longing. I follow the longing. I am moved. Deep in my heart, I am wounded, yet painfully happy.

Who is he that is able to create this power from the chaos through music, thoughts, people and planets, to set them in motion in dance and to make the miracle of creation tangible? And is anyone able to remain modest, who detects this mighty event in his innermost being? Would he succeed in resisting the temptation and in protecting himself from infatuation, recognising that he is only a gifted instrument in God's hands? Would he not see himself as the creator of things, thus separating himself from his sublime creative impulse – God if you want? To me, his work seems so great and mighty; his thoughts are so fiery, his ideas so sublime. It seems almost impossible for a person not to be confused by those lofty visions and to identify with them. I cannot judge whether this person, Alexander Scriabin, succeeded.

The Prometheus mystery

Inspired by Helena Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, his pioneering composition, *Prometheus*, was born. In the chapter *Prometheus* – the titan, Blavatsky explained the link between the Greek *Prometheus* and the Hindu meaning of this famous fire bearer. This no longer concerns the theft of the fire, but igniting the spirit spark in the human being by the divine fire. 'You know, in my *'Prometheus'*, the light originates! I would like it to become a symphony of fire, an entire hall with alternating lighting. Here they burn, the fiery tongues. See how the flames lighten, here as well as in the music..

Scriabin's musical mystery, *Prometheus*, is a synaesthetic work. *Prometheus*, (*'Le poème du feu'*, 1910), a work for large orchestra, piano and organ, choir and 'colour organ', became Scriabin's most important composition. This work received its special, poetic effect by the *Prometheus* chord that also serves as the *Pleroma* chord, symbolising the fullness and the power of everything that is. The perfect harmony of the *Prometheus* chord may be seen and experienced as the realisation of

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) lived in the 'silver time'. The Russian poet Andrei Bely wrote about this time: 'Now the content of the arts is the same as the content of renewing life. The arts themselves call up such a life.' At the time, the Russian artists yearned for illumination. By their work and by their personal struggle, they shaped the deepest human longing. An artist of this calibre was Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) – Russian composer and philosopher, who was the first one to create a 'synaesthetic', musical, total work of art, a multimedia performance we would call it nowadays, in which sound, colour, form and movement go together in one great ensemble. Scriabin's genius flared up as a torch by the music. He experienced and manifested illumination by the form of the light chord. 'Music is a path of revelation; you are unable to imagine what a mighty method to knowledge this is. If you only knew how much I understood through music! Everything that I now think and express – all of it, I know through my art,' he testified.

the theosophical principle of omnia in omnibus (everything in everyone). The inner plan of the work is based on the mystery of the world order. This is why we also hear ancient mystery vocals, sung by the human voice, in this composition. The work is the summit of Scriabin's oeuvre, in which he expressed his mystical-philosophical ideas. Scriabin tried to turn illumination into the deed in a musical way. He considered this the fulfilment of his task.

During the last five years of his life, he worked on the Prometheus mystery. He envisaged the ultimate purpose of this as the liberation of the world from matter. The performance of this grand, synaesthetic work would last a week and ultimately, all inhabitants of the earth would participate in it. In India, in the foothills of the Himalayas, he wanted to build a temple of the spheres, the form of which would change gradually. The composer envisaged a 'flowing architecture':



Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

form, dance, procession, music as a symphony of smells, and the declamation of healing aphorisms would be linked with the power of the sound of light.

According to Scriabin's ideas, the seven days of creation contained millions of years of evolution, and at the end of the seventh day, the moment of the universal summit would be reached. The world would change into a place of happiness and bliss. Then all people would be able to transform into new beings, linked with eternal, divine beauty. ☆



illumination for gamers

VAN LAST LIFE NAAR REAL LIFE

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW FIRST
If you belong to those who consider computers, the Internet and everything it involves with some suspicion and from a certain distance; if you hold these devices responsible for the moral degeneration, for the coarsening of the youth and also for the imminent decline of the Occident; if you generally consider them satanic inventions, please, lament no longer. You may possibly recognise yourself, if only partly, in the following text, but you may perhaps experience that spiritual matters can also be expressed in an unusual way that was not possible until now. All those, who must time and again hear that their favourite instrument and hobby is nothing other than modern merchandise and actually a roller coaster to damnation, will be able to ascertain that – perhaps to their great satisfaction – spiritual matters can also be expressed in another way than those used in the past.

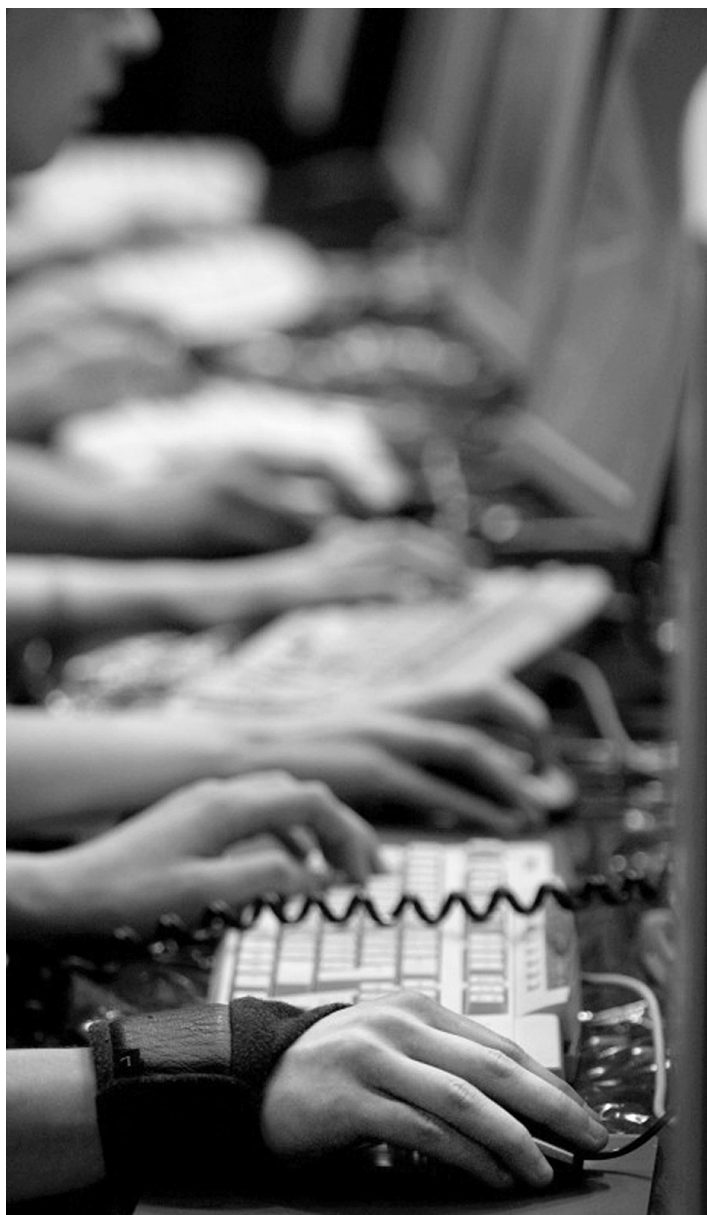
Perhaps, this text can contribute to mutual understanding; by the way, the most important technical terms are explained in the notes at the end of this article.

LAST LIFE For about ten years, the author has been a computer ‘freak’, but he has in this context, as far as he knows, not incurred consequential damage. At this moment, he has, in addition to his work on other things, also advanced to his fifth ‘Level-80’ figure in ‘World of Warcraft’.

I have played ‘Last Life’ for as long as I have been able to think. And for exactly as long, I am totally fed up with it. Admittedly, the structures (textures ¹) and light effects are not bad and usually there is little lag ². But the quests ³ are monotonous and tiring and the rewards are never worth the trouble, and the artificial intelligence of the NPCs ⁴ is, putting it mildly, sobering.

I am quite alone in this point of view. The majority of my fellow gamers is immersed in it, partly enthusiastically, partly grimly, though with holy zeal, and always set themselves the same tasks in the same realms of the game world. Then they always encounter the same obstacles and opponents whom they attack with a range of strategies that are described quite charitably with the word ‘orderly’. The reward for all their efforts (which they do not experience as such, but rather as the goal of life, indeed, even their right of existence) is a few collected coins and pieces of equipment, all kinds of gadgets which they can sell again for a few more coins at the NPC dealer. Rewards that they could trade in to the quest givers in exchange for successful quests, marginally increase respect with some group as well as providing experience points. If sufficient experience points have been collected, a new ‘level’ is reached. One ‘levels’, as those concerned call it. With every new life, there is the possibility to learn new skills and talents or to improve the existing ones, to use top rate equipment and generally,

I feel imprisoned and robbed of my vital power,
not occupied and guided as my fellow gamers are



to present oneself ever more smugly, in order next to carry on with the endless treadmill of fighting, seeking, collecting raw materials and subsequently producing all kinds of objects a bit faster, more elegantly and more efficiently. And so on, ad infinitum.

I am quite skilled in 'Last Life'. I had already reached the highest level quite some time ago. Long ago, I had already maximised my skills, talents and my reputation in all groups that are important to me. I possess equipment and air and land vehicles like the ones from the old stories, and obviously also enormous stores of gold, and during the raids ⁵ of my guild ⁶, I am a welcome participant in the group.

However, in spite of all this, I cannot avoid the feeling that all of it is hollow and empty and this is not only because it no longer means a challenge – I had already felt this long before I became so successful. Nor is it caused by lack of variety; the game producers always add new elements and they really do everything to keep 'Last Life' fascinating.

NO GOAL, NO PURPOSE AND NO END However, it always remains fascinating in the same way and this is actually as frustrating as it would be if it was just simply dull (in one way). The point is always the ever recurring promise that is time and again fulfilled only outwardly, but not really: a new environment, new beings, new skills, new top levels, higher, further, faster, more, and nevertheless only

more of the same. And in all servers ⁷ it is the same story: all gamers become bogged down in the same treadmill of higher, further, faster and more, and most of them do not even notice how mindless, senseless and dulling this endless routine is.

Within itself, this game does not have a goal, a purpose or an end. Most gamers are content with unceasingly chasing after winning, successes and improvements and they are wholly occupied by it. Those who have achieved everything that can be achieved in the game, arrogantly revel in the effortlessness with which they can do everything routinely and without exerting themselves.

However, he who, like me, has reached a limit where he must acknowledge that he only revolves in meaningless and ever recurring, infinite circles, the single-minded chasing becomes a desert, in which no colour or sign of life can gladden the tired eye. The throat becomes parched by the dust in which I would like to shout at heaven and to curse the earth for this senseless torture by the monotony; to what I owe it, I do not even know.

In this game, even death does not bring peace or salvation; the gamer may lose all health points and is then 'dead', yet only to be re-awakened immediately and to continue playing in the place where he had last stopped. The old dream of immortality has become reality here and it proves to be a poor, self-defeating farce in face of the gray, inexorable 'more of the same' that does not offer a way-out here.

This is why the servers (that are ironically called so) have become a labyrinth to me, in which I feel imprisoned and the game producers are my jailers. They would probably be surprised and insulted if I found a way to communicate this to them; after all, they only do that for which they exist, that is, doing what is expected of them. And they are quite good at it. However, it does not change things. I feel imprisoned and robbed of my vital power, not occupied and guided as my fellow gamers are, with whom I cannot speak about it either. I tried to do so, and I soon gave up. They do not understand it; they think that my standards are too high, that I am oversensitive or simply someone who is no longer on the ball.

A PLACE WITHOUT OPPOSITES At such moments, I go to a place where there are no other gamers, take a bit of ore or pick a few herbs only for myself, and surrender to my fantasies. Those are not dreams in which I experience concrete, tangible events; they are rather subtle, hardly tangible impressions, for which I do not have words or images. I cannot say from whence they stem.

As time passes, these silent impressions become clearer. I still have no words or images for them, but I do have an ever-clearer feeling. Then my consciousness translates this feeling into images that I am able to understand; the dream of a server without downtime ⁸ or a level limiter, actually without

I logged out. Everything became different, new

limitations, where no one needs to lose for someone else to be able to win.

It is a place where it does not matter who is best in some banality, but where everyone is the best, quite simply because everyone is seen as unique and is appreciated as such. It is where there can be no struggle and no conflict, because there are no opposites. It is a place where nothing needs to perish for something else to originate and where not every joy immediately bears the germ of the following disappointment. This is a place where everything is permeated and irradiated by a profound, valuable, fulfilling meaning. In the meantime, this longing has become more important to me than anything else. The different activities that I performed in 'Last Life' for that entire life, I'd be better off without; for a long time now I have been done with them. I have largely alienated myself from my fellow gamers; once I was a great guy who, however, took a quite different course at a certain moment.

We still make contact and speak with each other, but it is only a ritual for old time's sake and because of mutual sympathy. I have become a stranger amongst friends, lonely amidst the turmoil. I am someone who remains seemingly indifferent to everything, apart from the one thing I lack, although I never experienced it and 'actually' cannot miss it, because I do not know it at all. I have an idea that makes me suspicious that inwardly I am not alone, because, how do we say this, how can I miss something that I do not know!

MIRROR EFFECT And particularly at this moment, when I should be seriously worried about my spiritual state, I suddenly received a letter. This also happens in 'Last Life'. It was not a long letter and not a spectacular one either. The senders called themselves 'friends', and it changed everything for me. This letter told me, in a few lines and without mincing words, that the gamer is only the mirror image in the game world of 'Last Life' of the true consciousness. As long as the consciousness is exclusively focused on the actions of the gamer in the game world, it is imprisoned, as it were, and has no insight into its true nature or into that of the rest of the world. This is also the reason why it cannot satisfy its true nature and destiny.

In most gamers, this original consciousness is wholly ruined and overgrown by the game and the gamer controlling it. However, the letter continued. When a certain saturation has been reached after sufficient experience with the aimless and endless repetition of the game, a free space is created in the gamer's consciousness. Earlier, this space was filled with chasing after higher, further, faster and more. Intuitive feelings became noticeable in this free space like the feeling that wholly alienated me from the only reality that I knew after all.

It struck me like a bolt from the blue. Everything I believed I knew, everything that I apparently once considered true or important vaporised before my inner eye like in a silent explosion.

Then I did something that was unimaginable to me before, if only because I did not know that it was possible: I logged out. Then everything became different, new. Eyes that were no longer mine, opened. They saw a world that had nothing to do with the one I knew and that, in spite of it, is as original as the original of this imitation.

A consciousness, to which my consciousness seems like an atom compared to the sun, saw this world through those eyes, observed it, was at home in it and was one with it. I see with it, but next to it and in it, I am still I, but also it, and therefore one with everything. Everything is in everyone, everything is one with everything and I am part of it. I am an atom of this sun, and my radiation is part of the radiation of this sun. It has always been so, and it will always be so.

After an endless period, during which I observed, mute and amazed, this wonderful world, I did the only thing that I know and that I am capable of: I logged in again. After all, I cannot leave the server just like that, as long as there are still gamers who do not know what they truly are. However, the server and the game producers no longer imprison me. I am *on* the server, but no longer *of* the server. ★

1. **Textures:** a repetitive pattern, by which the computer copies a structure to give the impression of spatial objects. There are textures for wood, skin, streaming water, stones et cetera.
2. **Lag:** delays in the network that manifest themselves as forced time-outs during the game and, in heavy cases, as severing the link (disconnect).
3. **Quest:** task of a knight of the Round Table; here it is a task that a gamer receives from a non-playing character.
4. **NPC:** non-playing character, virtual figure, created by the game, with which the gamer interacts. The NPCs may be traders, competence coaches, mercenaries, inn keepers et cetera.
5. **Raid:** attack in a realm with such strong opponents that only a well-equipped and experienced group of gamers has a chance. The experience and the objects that may be acquired there, are important and desirable in accordance with this.
6. **Guild:** association of gamers who help and support each other and, for instance, carry out common raids.
7. **Server:** a specialised, highly developed computer that disseminates large amounts of data in a network like the Internet as quickly as possible over many other computers; it 'serves' so to speak.
8. **Downtime:** period during which the server does not work, for instance because it malfunctions or because we wait.



the new word

Lecture held by Frans Spakman during the symposium
'The School of Wisdom of Life' at Renova, 27 November 2010

Life is beautiful.
And life is cruel.
However transient, its beauty may touch us deeply and wholly affect us and cause a permanent state of amazement.
What energy underlies the beauty of life?
Is it true that beauty, and not cruelty, is linked with wisdom?
And therefore, that life's wisdom tries to express itself through beauty because, for instance, the harmony underlying beauty, does not know struggle, revenge or cruelty?
Why is cruelty actually necessary in life?
Is there wisdom in a life of cruelty, anyway?
And is destruction, therefore, a necessary evil of life, as for instance the Old Testament suggests, but also Vishnu and Allah?
And what is this possible wisdom about what is cruel in life truly able to teach us?
In the course of the seasons of nature, we see a succession of harmony that leads to stillness, and dies, often in beauty; think of the leaves that change colour in autumn, followed by decline and destruction.
The cruelty and the destruction come after the harmony.
The storm pulls on the branches and takes not only the dead wood away.
And what should we think of the victims of natural disasters and of the rat races in nature of prey and predator with ever-subtler techniques of hunting and escape?
However, all of this is child's play compared to the cruelty that people commit against

each other and against animals.
Is beauty amidst suffering, violence and cruelty actually not cold comfort and moreover only temporary?
After all, we may become desperate through our experiencing of this suffering, this cruelty and this violence, similarly as it may become too much for the soul to experience everything, witness the following poem:

I can no longer bear grief,
or a face streaked with tears,
no longer support human sorrow
nor make the consequences of evil lighter;
no longer comfort those who are defeated,
and unceasingly despised,
no longer listen to those who complain,
victims of treason.

O soul, open my eyes,
and grant the tearless compassion
that lovingly envelops us
as a mantle, filled with patience.

What does wisdom that is linked with beauty actually consist of?
Is it motionless beauty? Unassailable, untouchable beauty that does not spread forth but radiantly keeps its distance from its environment? Is this out of respect or creating distance by natural authority?
Is the wisdom preserved in the beauty?
Where does the wisdom of life sojourn and can it be learned?

It is as Mirdad says: If we are at rest, we create harmony around us; if we are restless, chaos surrounds us. Therefore, the condition for creating beauty is perfect inner peace and quiet.

Wisdom is knowing this condition and acting accordingly by ever better understanding and following the inner voice.

Many know this condition and yearn to possess this peace that is unintelligible to our sensory mind.

They know that this property is not for sale, because wisdom is not preserved in beauty, but beauty shows its splendour on the basis of wisdom.

This wisdom as an inner property and as a source is oceanic.

‘The word, God, is the ocean’, Mirdad says.

‘The new word is the creative word. What it creates it melts and fuses into one, rejecting none as worthless.’

What is the sound of this new word?

The sound of the new word is fresh and transparent, and Mirdad recommends seeking for the knowledge of that word.

What is the rhythm of the new word?

The rhythm of the new word is a dance rhythm, because it contains life.

It is the living word that whirls through the coordinates of time and space.

It is the elusive vibration that solidifies from time into time in perceptible beauty.

It is the elusive quality that nevertheless gives



itself continuously away. It is the full wisdom of life that invites us to visit its source.

This wisdom actually tries to seduce us to go to its source, and if we allow its attraction and beauty to enter our consciousness with the look of our eyes and the splendour of our ears, we are unable to resist and we will desire wisdom, seduced by beauty.

Seen and heard in this way, philosophy is not an intellectual hobby or mental, clever rhetoric, because true philosophy does not need mental training.

In its fullness and beauty, life itself can induce us to yearn for the one. And by its beauty, navigating on the compass of our pure longing, we approach the inner source of wisdom and therefore the knowledge of the path that we still must carve out, the simple and balanced Gnosis that stimulates us to transformation by its power.

This concerns a beauty that shares and bridges distances instead of creating them.

This is the wisdom that becomes one in the new word, that ‘unites’ and invites us to an alchemical wedding, the unification.

Many words cannot remain new and powerful, because meaning and content wear down and



become devalued by frequent use. So-called inflation of meaning occurs, for instance, with the word truth or with the word wisdom. In this context, we may combine the results of much research that, objectively, truth, wisdom, goodness, and so on, cannot exist.

They wither like beauty and are therefore unable to offer a foothold for inner wisdom, for the path to the source and for the way out of this inner, oceanic source.

The certain knowledge of these concepts dissolves as it were in the sparkling renewal of the word that is Gnosis.

In order nevertheless to be able to refer and appeal to the existence of truth, wisdom and goodness, we sometimes speak of absolute truth, absolute goodness and absolute wisdom. Here, absolute means being raised above the power that puts culture in perspective and inflates meaning.

However – and this is the significance of this symposium – life itself offers you the experience and wisdom for the inner way; no absolutely external concept will be able to guide you inward or will make you acquire inner possessions.

This is why the way from outward to inner knowledge needs this new word, through which the insights immediately reach the desired level of acting, of enabling transformation.

The special feature of the new word is its radiation value.

The new word radiates with a half-life that is immeasurable.

It is not worthless, but valuetime-less!

The special feature is also that this new, gnostic power penetrates our system without friction, but nevertheless it provides the motor for transformation, for energetic change, for a mildly fiery inner process.

There is no friction and yet, it ignites and incites. Despite all our worldly wisdom and sophisticated metaphors, we are neither able to spell or pronounce this new word nor able to kindle the fire of the new word.

Is there then no starting point, no basic orientation for inner wisdom, for instance consciousness, soul or spark?

Aren't they again words, subject to wear and tear that in the long run become powerless; words that form mental images, from which life withdraws again by wear and tear?

We probably live in a time in which the wear and tear of the meaning and experiencing of words occurs more strongly than ever before.

The hypes are short-lived and fierce in our society and the experience quickly subsides,

so that we later, amazed, wonder by what we were carried away. Under which conditions will the new word, the immeasurable word, be able to enter our yearning, philosophical being. Forget yourself.

To forget yourself you must be yourself.

If you are moved; if you are amazed; if you are busy for someone else; if you in your work are able to lose your own desire for satisfaction, your own drive to score, your own pursuit of profit, your play to perpetuate your position and to continue your power; briefly, if the whirling power that is true life no longer experiences resistance in your life because you rather want to think of yourself, yes, then the new word penetrates, then this life, as the vibration of wisdom, lifts your microcosm to the level, on which transformation is possible.

If you are moved, you melt.

What matters to Mirdad is that you, after melting due to the new word, merge into a new unity.

If you are moved, you are affected, as you will agree with me, or do you?

You are touched and upset, moved and affected.

If you are upset in this way, you have forgotten yourself. It is the wisdom of life that you yourself are a drop of this oceanic wisdom.

What now matters is being yourself; what now matters is not drowning in this ocean in tears of emotion, but to allow the new word to do its work within you in a balanced way.

Obviously, you should remain steadfast in this. Be not afraid that this will become an undesirable I-striving; after all, you now stand in the consciousness of the soul and you do not feel the need to seize, to have and to hold; you are only yourself.

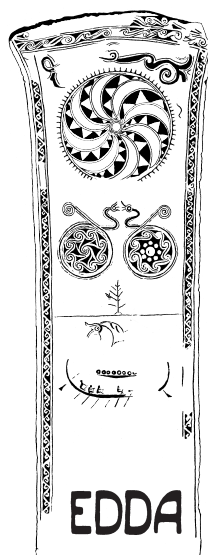
Compare it to music: you may be touched and affected. Perhaps you automatically know the bars and the music and recognise them, and the melody and the sound lead the dance of life to a certain moment within you.

You do not want to seize or possess, have and hold this moment, because you know that this is impossible, but also because you know that it is useless.

Its value cannot be found in a quality that can be seized; its value can be found in the moment that you have the courage to be yourself and understand the process of melting into a new unity and to give it a chance.

This is how the new word works; it has always worked in this way; this is how life intended it to be and thus the new word is actually very old, because it has no value-time. It is timeless.

And yet it is here and now. ☸



Countless myths have been passed down to us from the most diverse cultural periods. They contain images of early humanity depicting the origin of the world, the activity of the forces of nature, gods and fate after death.

the world tree

In the previous instalment of this series, we quoted verse two of the Song of the Edda:

*I remember yet
the giants of yore,
who gave me bread
in the days gone by.*

And Voluspa, the prophetess, continues:

*'Nine worlds I knew,
the nine in the tree
with mighty roots
beneath the mould.'*

Earlier we wrote (**Pentagram** 2010, no. 5): The myths, collected in the Edda, speak about the mysteries of the development of the world – the great ones as well as the small ones. In this verse, the prophetess gives evidence of this. She beholds nine worlds of genesis and sees nine branches on the world tree of human genesis, the primordial ash, Yggdrasil, as it is called in Germanic mythology.

The world ash is a cosmological representation of the universe. The tree symbolises the timeless, eternal centre of the world; it bears and sustains the universe and keeps the world inwardly together. It represents both a spiritual basic structure as well as an impulse to development.

The 'nine fatherlands, worlds' present an image of the ninefold structure of creation, reflected in the ninefold human being of yore. We are confronted with nine levels of development of the consciousness: the three times three aspects of the body, the soul and the spirit that are interrelated. The soul and the spirit speak in the body. The body as well as the spirit are manifested in the soul. The soul and the body prove themselves in the spirit.

THE BRANCHES OF YGGDRASIL That this is the case is clearly shown by the branches of Yggdrasil that spread over the whole world and stretch higher than heaven. The crown of the (spiritual) tree is Asgard, the castle of the gods. It is the cosmos of the ashes, living in the light. The highest, spiritual, eternal principle is Gimle, the morning red in ascent. When Asgard will one day be destroyed in Ragnarök, the turning point of history, renewal is enabled through Gimle. The ash or rainbow bridge Bifröst, where the white deity, Heimdall, the light figure with his sword and horn, keeps watch, links the world of the gods with that of man. Man calls this bridge a rainbow. It is a sphere of the soul that links what is

The world ash from Nordic mythology has remarkably many properties of the yew tree that grows abundantly in Nordic regions. This tree never loses its green and was therefore holy. On warm days, it exudes a gas from which people may get hallucinations. The lifespan of a yew tree is impressive: In Scotland, there is one that is over two thousand years old. It was also used in rituals, because the poisonous taxine may cause near-death experiences. After having hung on the tree for nine days, Odin received wisdom and insight into the runes, but had to sacrifice his eye.

‘above’ with what is ‘below’, heaven with the earth. It is indestructible as long as time lasts, but at the end of the period of development, this bridge will dissolve.

Like the branches, the roots of Yggdrasil also extend over the whole world. Here, too, we see three aspects. On one of the roots, leading to the Aesir, the gods, man lives. Their abode is called Midgard, the place in the middle. This place is surrounded by an outer circle, Urgard, the kingdom of the ice giants, which are the enemies of the Aesir. All inhabited kingdoms are surrounded by the Midgard serpent, which in a number of respects resembles the serpent Ourobouros. It is the symbol of the cosmic serpent that virtually surrounds the human world as a cosmic ring. It continues to grow, but, as the Ourobouros principle, it keeps quiet until the great, final struggle against the gods. Then it uncoils and shows the destructive aspect of its dual nature. There is a well of Urd near the abode of man. Here the gods assemble daily. It is the well of fate, the well of the three Norns, Urd, Skuld and Werlandi. They come to the cradle of every newborn and prophesise what his or her fate will be. In addition, it is their daily task to sprinkle the tree with healing water, thus keeping it permanently green because, as it is said in another song of the Edda: ‘The ash Yggdrasil suffers more injustice than man knows.’

THE ROOTS OF THE TREE People act in the polarity of the forces ‘from above’ and ‘from

below’. They themselves determine by their actions during their life what happens to them after their death. Odin guides the warriors, who fell gloriously in battle, to Valhalla, the hall of those who fell, to be found in Asgard. Here they practise for battle, and led by Odin, they can ride into the human world as participants in the ‘wild pack’. The souls of the people who died in another way, go to Helheim. In Nordic mythology, Helheim or Helgard is the underworld; this is where the daughter of the god Loki, Hel, has her abode. It lies below the second root of Yggdrasil. Here, too, the serpents gnaw the tree and the demon that devours corpses, the dragon Nidhogg, lives. It is cheerless and cold, and ice-cold water flows from the well near this root, by which everything that no longer wants or is able to live is swept along. Simultaneously, the stream of death ensures renewal, because it irresistibly sweeps along the dead forces, the limitations and hindrances, thus cleansing the soil for new growth.

Under the last root, we can, thirdly, find ‘Mimir’s well’. The giant Mimir guards the water of wisdom, of the mind, of memory (which word is derived from this name). Because Mimir drinks daily from the well of wisdom, he is considered the wisest of all tenacious entities and is often asked for advice by Odin (Wotan). The sphere of Mimir may be compared to a concept that modern esotericism calls the ‘psi-bank’ and that was formerly



**19th-century
representation
of the world ash,
Yggdrasil. Johann
Wilhelm Heine,
1886**

referred to as the Akasha chronicles: a vibrating web of energy, within which everything and everyone is permanently interrelated. Nothing is lost within this web... all experiences, events, thoughts and deeds of everything and everyone are recorded in it and

are accessible to everyone. Anyone may look into it who is pure, unprejudiced and loving enough to do so.

When Odin himself asks for a drink from this well, he must sacrifice an eye to Mimir.

The three Norns

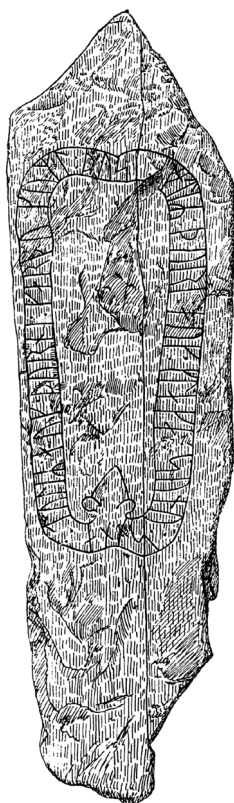
The primordial well, the well of fate, lies at the foot of the world ash Yggdrasil. It can be found in the depths of the subconscious of every human being. Here the three wise women, the three Norns, Urd, Verandi and Skuld, sojourn. Urd means the origin, the past, and is active until the present day, Verandi is the genesis and Skuld determines the current human fate. The goddesses of fate spin the threads of time and link past, present and future. As long as man was not conscious of himself, time did not exist for him either. Everything was the present. Ask and Embla, the first human nature beings, who were found by Odin 'on the beach', were 'without the power'. Without the experience of time and without insight into the spiritual laws, there is no responsibility or fate. However, the development continues. The Norns gave people the awareness of time. The increasing materialisation forced them into the dimensions of consciously experiencing time and space. What was first timelessness in the eternal here and now, then changed into former and later. Looking back, the consciousness began to recognise its own actions and looking ahead, it began to plan them. It became acquainted with energies, stemming from what was spiritual. In this way, insight developed in the human being about his origin and his destiny.

AN INNER SPECTACLE If the prophetess spoke about the world ash, Yggdrasil, about its roots and its crown, the audience saw these images before them. They listened in a quite different way than we, modern people, do. They didn't have the critical faculty that distinguishes between what was heard and the listening individual. They were wholly absorbed by what was etched into their inner being of the basic pattern underlying existence, underlying both the macrocosm as well as the small human world. On the level of the first root, they experienced their lives and the development of their consciousness. They became acquainted with the commandments of the gods and they learned to bear their own responsibility, for consequences presented themselves, if they did not act in accordance with those universal laws. In this way, they also experienced the closeness of the well of fate. On the level of the second root, they became aware of the depths of what we nowadays call the subconscious. They experienced that they would be swamped by it after death, if something of Odin's courage, who was, after all, divine, did not manifest itself in them. This is why battle was so important, because the self-sacrificing

courage during the battle against the forces and properties of nature formed the beginning of the development of the consciousness that would be crowned in Valhalla.

Ultimately, a relationship with the level of the third root, where wisdom develops, could then emerge. In those people, something still lived of the memory of a nature, in which everything that had once happened was recorded. Simultaneously, they acquired the insight as to why there was battle, because a human being gains wisdom when the spiritual and the natural aspect struggle with each other in his inner being for the human heart.

THE JOYFUL HOME IN THE GARDEN OF THE GODS By dauntless courage, the warrior assimilated the energies of pure, spiritual being at the top of Yggdrasil. Here, in Asgard, is Gladsheim, 'the joyful home', one of the three abodes of Odin. It is a plain, a field that the ancient Nordic nations personified and worshipped as the highest deity. Odin lives in Gladsheim, but we also see him often in Valaskjálf. There is his seat Hlidskjálf, from where he looks out over the nine worlds. At the same time, mythology explains that this



**Rune stone in
Södra Ving in
Höderum,
Sweden.
The text reads:
Tulir and
Burnir made
this cairn (pile
of stones) after
Buri and Klaka,
their sons.**

concerns a deity, who progresses in deepening and expansion through his link with people. The deity expands as it were when man has the eye of Odin, the pineal gland, once again at his disposal, which is, after all, the organ with which man can 'see' in Gladsheim, this joyful place in Asgard, the garden of the Gods. From there, he daily descends to Midgard, in the centre of the body. If what is divine indeed unfolds in a human being, Odin is the symbol of the properties of the Spirit-Soul. In the language of Germanic mythology, he is the radiant one, the white helper, the poet of skalden (or songs), the master of language and writing. However, if someone is still in the power of the forces of nature, he experiences Odin as a threat, as the bloodthirsty, raging warmonger and as the leader of the army of savages, the symbol of the driving power of the spirit that incites man to development, or to relapse into the depths of Helheim.

HANGING FOR NINE NIGHTS The myths relate that Odin hung on the world tree for nine nights. In him, the divine element must fight through nine states of consciousness. From this, the nine spheres, nine empires developed

because the fire of the spirit flared up in the universe.

All sparks that once emanated from this spirit, go the same way! The spiritual human being travels through each sphere. This is the way of the 'glorious victor'! Spiritual consciousness and 'Odin' are united through nine lofty developments on the physical, the soul and the spiritual level, during three times three stages, through the nine branches of the tree of life, from root to crown.

On the lowest plane, in the sphere of matter, this tremendous development involves a few great dangers. They are shown because the self-willed intellect gives precedence to the body. In the figure of the demigod Loki, the will of the pure warrior is distracted from Gladsheim and focused on personal interests. Loki corresponds to Lucifer. The discovery of one's own will is a fascinating, but also a terrifying experience for the young ego. Seen from the level of the newly gained consciousness, he sees his task, his responsibility and the dangers of his path that make a terribly upsetting impression on him. The extent to which the human development is linked with the world tree, can also be derived from the fact that 'üggr' means frighten. ★



BOOK REVIEW: MASTER ECKHART'S WAY TO COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

a guide to practical mysticism

'Our longing for eternity is actually the longing of eternity for us.
The seeker for God is also the one who is sought by God.'

More than ever, modern people ask in this time for the deeper meaning of life. This is why, after seven centuries, the great German mystic, Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), receives a lot of attention again. His religio surpasses all confessions. He was well-acquainted with the religious and philosophical teachings of the West, Greece and Egypt, of the Near East and distant Asia – he stood on the top of the mountain and knew that all roads from the valley come together at the top. Nowadays, we acknowledge that Eckhart, who fathomed the unfathomable, was the greatest proclaimer in the West of a universal, cosmic religion.

Johann Eckhart or Eckehart was a member of the Dominican Order or the *Ordo Praedicatorum*, a monastic order that distinguished itself by its intellectual aspirations. In the thirteenth century, they had, guided by their founder

Guzman, supplied most mental ammunition – and had, from Spain and the South of France, boosted hatred sufficiently – to begin the crusades against the Albigenses. In this context, they had sharpened their thinking in order to refute the statements of the Cathars. In the beginning of the fourteenth century, the members of this order were also the ones who fought the last outward and fragmented groups of Cathars – with thorough interrogations – and had, via the worldly powers, put their still remaining, individual members to death in the cruellest fashion. What nevertheless happened was that the liberating work, and all the activities, undertaken for the West on the basis of the inspiration by the brotherhood, was usually shaped within those orders, for the simple reason that there was no opportunity to do so anywhere else. This is why important attempts to achieve renewal and reformation originated within the monastic orders. Just think of Waldo, the found-

er of the Waldensians. Think of Luther. Think of hermetic thinkers like Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. It is a strange irony that the order of the Dominicans, which the Gnostics had learned to view with the necessary reticence and reserve, also proved to be a breeding ground for still newer impulses to achieve greater inner freedom. It is remarkable, and sometimes hard to understand, how universality time and again, right through everything, was able to break through to the hearts of people who were prepared to approach this universality, surpassing the natural soul, with their whole being.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the order of the Dominicans was only moderately active in the region around Strasbourg. Faith had long become a matter for the theologians of the university at the moment when Master Eckhart, on the basis of a refund inspiration, liberated the living faith from the concoctions of contemporary science. After all, he was very well acquainted with them: he was trained in the same monastery where Albertus Magnus taught and where the strong influence of Thomas Aquinas, who had died shortly before, was still tangible.

He was an exemplary pupil. Eckhart actually completed a glorious career, and was at a young age invited to teach theology at the priory of St. Jacques in Paris, at the time one of the most renowned religious centres. During his stay there, he incurred the enmity of the Franciscans by winning a debate with them, during which he expressed his ideas about the union of the hu-

man being with God by a mystical, inner process of gaining consciousness. There he explained clearly for the first time that the divine element, 'a divine spark', is to be found in the soul and that it is the calling of every human being to become a son of God, as Christ is.

Although Eckhart was an astute teacher of theology and was renowned for his lectures about profound, scholastic topics that nowadays no longer mean anything to us, he nevertheless preferred to transmit the pure teachings of the God-in-Man to his compatriots in German: How can the soul grow? What are the ethics of the heart? Where can a person find his ideals? Eckhart continued to emphasise that there is a spark in all of us, a particle of the spirit that is of God, and that the human soul, as the vehicle of this spark, is able to cleanse itself of selfishness. However, this is different from obeying rules. Eckhart stated: 'God never linked the salvation of man to a certain pattern of life... This is why a person must be convinced of the divine presence and be ensouled by the form of the beloved God who abides within him, so that he is able to emanate this presence without doing anything to it.'

Then there is a simple, not-ego basis for ideals, Christian life and true ethics. Thus the human being clears the way for the soul that can ascend to or become one with ('perish in', as Eckhart said) the 'Goodness', the consciousness that pervades both the human being as well as the whole universe.

As a philosopher of life and adviser, **Karl Otto Schmidt** (1904-1977), the editor of this book, wrote over 100 books about questions of the will, meditation, mysticism, life and death. His experiences with the imperishability of the inner nucleus in a human being and the touch by the inner light have always shown the direction of his books. Since 1930, he represented Germany in international movements, occupied with 'approaching the content of religions'. This is why he was arrested in 1941, but he survived the concentration camp of Weltheim. In 1970, he was appointed as a member of the presidium of the League for Universal Religion. In 1972, he received the Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his work. He died in Reutlingen, Germany, in 1977. After his death, he was honoured with a honorary doctorate of the United Church of Religious Science in Los Angeles.

Under pressure from his superiors, he had to pay for his courage and his candour by renouncing his teachings. Eckhart was accused and even chased; ultimately, it got to the point where he had to defend himself before the Pope, but he did not hear the latter's final decision, because he died in a mysterious way on his return journey from Avignon (where the Pope's court was established during those years, and where he believed he had defended his propositions successfully).



In the meantime, the church was quite at a loss what to do with Eckhart and his supporters, these new mystics who found such a large

audience. Immediately after Eckhart's death, a number of his doctrines were condemned as heretical, but that did not stop the flow. The 'Gottesfreunde' or Friends of God, and certainly also his pupils, Tauler and Jan van Ruusbroeck, all of them counted amongst the Rhineland Mystics, played an important role in the process of opening up the consciousness of the mediæval human being, who was seeking the Kingdom of God that is within us.

In this book, the author, K.O. Schmidt, takes us along on Eckhart's path to cosmic consciousness. He shows how three stages can be distinguished in this inner work, with a total of ten steps. The first four steps constitute the stage of internalisation or purification, the next three steps form the stage of spiritualisation or illumination, and the last three steps are the deification or the union with what is divine. ☆



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life's school of wisdom